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Boating safety important for area's autumn outdoors enthusiasts

Clarkston, Wash., -- Fall is here and the ducks and geese are on the wing and the steelhead are making their way upstream. The autumn outdoor recreation season is in full swing but so it's important to remember boating safety is just as important now as any other time of year, according to a park ranger for the Walla Walla District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"There are a number of things fishers and hunters can do to help make their trip to the region's waters safer and more enjoyable," said Darren Opp, a park ranger for Corps facilities in the region. "Common sense is one of the most important tools you've got to help you make the trip an enjoyable memory. There are some other topics you may want to put on a checklist before leaving."

These include:

INSPECT -- Boats, motors, trailers, hitches to be sure everything is working properly.

LIGHTS -- Vehicle, trailer and boat running lamps can burn out or break so check them often during low-light periods to be sure that you can be seen when the sun goes down.

WEAR -- An approved personal flotation device in a size appropriate for the user. Check laws in your state to find out about mandatory or discretionary use.

DRESS -- Warmly and in layers to keep the chill off.

GAS UP -- Both your vehicle and your watercraft to ensure you're going to be able to get back when the trip is winding down.

WATCH -- Keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstacles. Be especially careful when operating near commercial navigation lanes. Barges create a large wake, have difficulty stopping and they have right of way.

AVOID -- Restricted areas near dams as turbulent conditions may exist.

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For more information, visit with a Corps park ranger at any location or check these web sites:
www.nww.usace.army.mil and <http://watersafety.usace.army.mil/> . **-30-**